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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BEIJING 000037

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM; EAP/PD; EAP/RSP; G/TIP CCHAN-DOWNER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/11/2035

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: CHINA-MONGOLIA COOPERATION ON TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Ben Moeling. Reason
s 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: China-Mongolia cooperation on combating trafficking in persons (TIP) improved over the past year, particularly at the local levels, according to official and NGO contacts in Beijing, Ulaanbaatar and Erlian, a Chinese town located near the PRC-Mongolia border. Mongolian officials described counter-TIP collaboration with local Chinese counterparts as "very good" so long as these counterparts were adequately informed and had the skill set to respond effectively to TIP cases. Mongolian trafficking victims faced particular hardships in China, the primary destination country for Mongolian trafficking victims, particularly in areas where local Chinese authorities had not received specialized training or were not experienced in TIP issues, reported one Ulaanbaatar-based NGO contact. Training Chinese and Mongolian local security officials was the key to ensuring the use of "correct practices" in TIP cases, suggested another NGO interlocutor. Counter-TIP training in select border towns had helped sensitize Chinese officials to the plight of trafficked Mongolian women and girls and had reinforced to Mongolian officials the importance of cooperating with Chinese counterparts. End Summary.

12. (SBU) PolOffs discussed China-Mongolian cooperation on counter-TIP efforts during a series of meetings in Beijing, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia and the Chinese border city of Erlian in Inner Mongolia with: the Consul General to the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing on September 10; the Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) Consular Department Director, The Asia Foundation and the Mongolia Gender Equality Center (GEC) in Ulaanbaatar on November 4; and the Mongolian Consul General to Erlian on November 6 in Erlian. Embassy contacts had suggested a visit to Erlian, the primary gateway for Mongolian trafficking victims crossing the border into China, to gain a better understanding of the trafficking problem and to discuss the recent improvement of Chinese-Mongolian cooperation on counter-TIP efforts, especially at the local level.

Bilateral Cooperation on Counter-Tip Efforts

13. (C) Chinese cooperation with Mongolia on TIP in the last year improved at the working level in Chinese destination cities for Mongolian victims of trafficking (VOTs), MFAT Consular Department Director Damba Gankhuyag told PolOff in a November 4 meeting in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Beginning in 2009, China had become more forthcoming in its cooperation with Mongolia on TIP issues, he said. Gankhuyag said that the PRC Ministry of Justice (MOJ) had agreed to, but had not yet signed, Mongolia's proposed bilateral consular agreement

to exchange information on TIP cases. The proposed consular agreement would upgrade the two countries' counter-TIP collaboration from the current mid-level consultations between consular officials to the justice ministry level, according to Gankhuyag. He acknowledged that relations between the two justice ministries previously had been under strain. Mongolia and China still had no Mutual Legal Assistance Agreement although Mongolia had long requested one. And on TIP issues, said Gankhuyag, Mongolia typically initiated contact with its neighbor to the south, while China was more reactive.

14. (C) As of early January 2010, Chinese and Mongolian officials were finalizing a formal agreement to provide assistance to Mongolian trafficking victims in the Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR), Gankhuyag said. This agreement would set forth parameters for the exchange of information between Macau and Mongolian police departments on Mongolian citizens who had been identified as potential or verifiable VOTs, explained Gankhuyag, and would serve as a model for future agreements with Chinese cities such as Shenzhen. Later this month, a delegation headed by MFAT State Secretary Tsogtbaatar and comprised of officials from MFAT and the Mongolian Embassy in Beijing will travel to Macau to sign the agreement with Macau public security officials. On the same trip a similar agreement on TIP information sharing and victim assistance, in the form of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Hong Kong SAR and Mongolian officials, will be signed in the Hong Kong SAR as well, MFAT officials told Embassy Ulaanbaatar PolOff on January 6. Mongolian consular and police officials visited

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the PRC southern city of Shenzhen in August 2009 to explore cooperation on TIP issues, although no agreement for Shenzhen currently is in the works.

"Exemplary" Counter-TIP Cooperation in Border Town...

15. (C) Mongolian counter-TIP cooperation with the local Chinese Public Security Bureau (PSB) in Erlian, a Chinese city near the PRC-Mongolian border (also referred to as Erenhot in Mongolian), was "exemplary," said Mongolian Consul General in Beijing Yadmaa Ariunbold during a September 10 meeting in Beijing with PolOff. The positive cooperation in Erlian led Mongolia to forge a similar arrangement with Macau SAR authorities.

16. (C) During a November 6 meeting in Erlian with Poloff, Mongolian Consul General in Erlian Myagmar described the Consulate's cooperation with Erlian police on combating trafficking of Mongolian women as "positive." After Mongolian VOTs contacted the Mongolian Consulate to seek help, the Consulate would turn these cases over to local Chinese police for investigation, rescue, and repatriation assistance. Mongolian MFAT Consular Department Director Gankhuyag also affirmed that cooperation with working-level officials in Erlian and Macau was "very good," particularly if these officials were adequately informed of trafficking cases and had the skill set to respond effectively. Gankhuyag noted that officials in these places often worked closely with Mongolian NGOs such as the Mongolian Gender Equality Center (GEC) to counter TIP and protect VOTs.

..."Inadequate and Uncoordinated" Elsewhere

17. (C) While hailing the "dynamic" counter-TIP cooperation between local-level Mongolian and Chinese public security officials in Erlian and with authorities in Macau, Ariunbold bemoaned to PolOff the "inadequate and uncoordinated response" of local Chinese Public Security Bureaus (PSBs) with whom Mongolian authorities had not previously established ties. In his view, local Chinese auth/QQ\azS%Qinistry of Public Security (MPS) Office to Combat Trafficking in

Persons had nationwide jurisdiction to rescue and assist VOTs and that the PRC Ministry of Civil Affairs was responsible for protecting and providing services to rescued VOTs.

Mongolians Trafficked to China

18. (SBU) Nearly one million Mongolians crossed the Mongolian-Chinese border every year, Gankhuyag stated, with three to seven thousand passing through Erlian daily. Mongolians were free to cross into China for up to 30 days without a visa (14 days in Hong Kong and three months in Macau), making it difficult for Mongolian and Chinese authorities to assess an exact number of Mongolians in China. Gankhuyag estimated that there were 5,000 Mongolian permanent residents in China, 3,000 of whom were students and business persons, and 2,000 of whom were unaccounted for.

19. (C) China was the primary destination country for Mongolian sex and labor trafficking victims, said Asia Foundation Program Manager Avkhia Jargalan in a November 4 meeting with PolOffs in Ulaanbaatar. Nearly all Mongolians trafficked through or into China traveled from Ulaanbaatar through the border town of Erlian. Many victims, primarily women, stayed in Erlian, while others were trafficked to Macau, Hong Kong, and Shenzhen. Geleg Ganbayasgakh, Director of the Mongolian Gender Equality Center (GEC) in Ulaanbaatar, a leading NGO in the fight against trafficking of Mongolians, told PolOffs during a separate meeting November 4 in Ulaanbaatar that Mongolian VOTs were also trafficked to

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Hohhot, Beijing, Chongqing, and other border cities.

110. (C) In a separate conversation in Erlian November 6, Ganbayasgakh noted that most female Mongolian VOTs are between the ages of 18-25 years with a nearly 80 percent rate of sexual exploitation. Ganbayasgakh described how Mongolian women often were lured to come to China with promises of work. However, upon arrival in China, the VOTs were told that they were required to pay off a RMB 10,000 (USD\$1,470) debt and could repay it by engaging in prostitution. The debt was designed to be very difficult to pay, and victims were frequently told that they could have some of their debt forgiven if they contacted female friends in Mongolia and convinced them to come to China. These friends then fell into the same trap, said Ganbayasgakh, adding that traffickers in China periodically relocated victims to protect their investment from local police enquiries. Traffickers also increased their profits by moving victims to new locations where prostitution fees were higher.

111. (C) According to Jaragalan, trafficking rings typically were comprised of three to seven VOTs with Mongolian traffickers transporting victims across the border and Chinese traffickers receiving trafficking victims. Mongolian women usually were courted in advance of being trafficked for a period of up to 3 months by Mongolian traffickers. The Mongolian traffickers often have cross-border ties to Inner-Mongolian Chinese, and tend to be friends, relatives, or contacts of their victims. Mongolian traffickers typically received USD\$500 to USD\$1000 for each victim trafficked.

Foreign VOTs Face Particular Hardship

112. (C) Foreign female trafficking victims faced particular hardships in China, especially in areas where public security forces had yet to receive adequate training and were not aware of how to handle TIP cases, said Jargalan. In areas where TIP training of security officials was not prevalent, Chinese "immigration police" had been known to treat Mongolian trafficking victims as "irregular migrants," charging fees or fines and placing them in deportation centers; however, this practice was beginning to change.

Most Mongolian VOTs, fearful of being detained, were reluctant to seek help from Chinese local authorities and in many cases were unaware of resources available to them because of the language barrier. Trafficking hotlines in China and Macau lacked Mongolian speaking staff. Jargalan suggested establishing a call forwarding program in China that would enable Mongolian trafficking victims' calls to be connected to the GEC-administered Mongolian domestic trafficking hotline in Mongolia.

Training of Local Security Yields Positive Results

¶13. (C) The Mongolian Gender Equality Center (GEC) since 2007 had been working with Chinese and Mongolian local security forces posted in the cross-border towns of Erlian, China and Zamiin-Uud, Mongolia to increase bilateral cooperation on Mongolian TIP cases, Ganbayasgakh said. GEC initially tried to establish a basis for this bilateral cooperation through Mongolian government channels, but was more successful establishing bilateral ties at the local level with tacit approval from Mongolia's MFAT and China's MPS.

¶14. (C) In May 2008 and May 2009, GEC conducted joint training sessions for Chinese and Mongolian local security forces in Erlian and Zamiin-Uud on appropriate procedures for identifying, providing care to, and repatriating VOTs. The training sensitized Chinese officials to the plight of trafficked Mongolian females, stressed to Mongolian officials the importance of cooperating with Chinese counterparts, and educated the officials on the correct methods of doing so. Prior to the training, Chinese security officials viewed all Mongolian women working in the sex trade as voluntary prostitutes and not VOTs. As a result of this training, there has been significant joint cooperation on TIP cases and a formal memorandum on providing repatriation assistance and support to VOTs in the border area was signed by the Chief of the Erlian City Policy and the Chief of the Zamiin-Uud Police on November 13, 2009, according to Ganbayasgakh. Moreover, Mongolian trafficking victims in Erlian were no longer

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charged fees or penalized for violating Chinese immigration law.

¶15. (C) With many of the Erlian and Zamiin-Uud security forces trained and employing "correct practices" in TIP cases, GEC was beginning to engage Chinese security officials and their Mongolian counterparts in other border towns, such as Hohhot, where it hoped to employ the "Erlian model" as well. Despite significant progress, there remained "difficulties" with the implementation of counter-TIP procedures among some Chinese local security forces, Ganbayasgakh noted. Chinese police continue to emphasize identification, rescue and repatriation of VOTs over providing adequate care and counseling, a role that NGOs were trying to fill. In border towns where local security forces had not received specialized TIP training, Chinese local authorities were known to charge Mongolian VOTs 500 yuan a day for violating Chinese immigration law. The Chinese tended to react to information provided by the GEC, rather than initiate finding and rescuing VOTs themselves, Ganbayasgakh acknowledged.

Erlian: "Unsafe" Border Town

¶16. (C) The city of Erlian was "extremely unsafe, especially for women," especially when they entered areas controlled by organized crime, said a former police official, current owner of an Erlian-based import/export company, and occasional bodyguard for Mongolian NGO workers. During a meeting with PolOff on November 6, the bodyguard (who declined to provide his name) described a recent operation, led by GEC director Ganbayasgakh, to rescue trafficked Mongolian woman from an Erlian brothel. The official policy toward drugs and

prostitution in Erlian was "relaxed," he explained, because it was a border town. To illustrate his point, the former police officer drove PolOff by an Erlian police station surrounded by a large number of brothels. Despite this permissive policy, local police occasionally conducted raids on local prostitution dens. PolOff later was driven to an area in the south of Erlian where a recent raid had closed a large number of brothels. (Note: Mongolian Consul General Ariunbold separately told PolOff on September 10 that Chinese police were reluctant to shut down the brothels near the police station in Erlian because this only would result in the brothels operating elsewhere away from the "watchful eyes" of local police.)

¶17. (C) Organized crime was "pervasive" in Erlian, the bodyguard continued. Experienced in cross-border trade, he described how organized crime rings hired Mongolian drivers to transport women from Mongolia to Erlian. From there, the women either remained in Erlian or Chinese drivers transported them to Beijing. The transportation system was loosely organized, employing many drivers who did not work full time for organized crime. Local government officials and crime bosses organized the trade, from a "higher level," he said, and did not usually get involved in the day-to-day details of transporting women.

HUNTSMAN